

1694

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S E R M O N

Preached before the

Q U E E N,

DECEMBER the 10th. 1693.

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Preach'd before the  
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W H I T E H A L L,  
*December the 10th. 1693.*

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By *S A. F R E E M A N*, D. D. Dean of *Peter-  
borough*; and Chaplain in Ordinary to Their Majesties.

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*W. J. A. N.*

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## I JOHN V. 4.

*This is the Victory that overcometh the  
World, even our Faith.*



OR the better and more useful treating on these Words, it will be necessary to give an Answer to these Four Enquiries :

I. What it is to overcome the World ?

II. What that Faith is that overcomes the World ?

III. What are the Strengths and Forces of Faith, whereby it obtains this Victory ?

IV. How it comes to pass, that notwithstanding them, Faith is so often overcome by the World ?

I. What it is to overcome the World ?

By the *World* is meant the Things of the World, as well the Profits, and Honours, and Pleasures, as the Afflictions and Persecutions of

it; and to *overcome* these, is, Not to be overcome by them, to stand it out Resolute and Unshaken against all their Temptations.

If you then would know, Who is the great Conqueror of the world? It is not he, who out of a restless Ambition and insatiable Thirst for Glory and Empire, carries his Victorious Arms to the remotest Parts of the earth; but the man under this Twofold Character:

1. Who hath subdued his Inclinations and Appetites to all things here below, and moderated his Affections and Passions about them.

Who exercising severe and impartial Judgment on the good things of the world, and perceiving them to have no great Worth in themselves, nor to be of any considerable Advantage to men; that they afford no present Content, nor future Happiness to the Soul; becomes so arm'd against their Tempting Force, that they can make no impression on his mind; that he neither desires them immoderately; nor pursues them unjustly; nor uses them selfishly, but for the benefit of others as well as himself; is not transported with excessive Joy in the acquisition of them, nor overwhelm'd with disconsolate  
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Sorrow in the missing of them, or parting from them.

Who on the other hand, duly weighing the nature and consequences of the evil things of the World, and finding them either to be merely Imaginary, or short and transitory; that many of them admit of a remedy, and none of them exclude comfort; that all of them may have a very profitable use, and a very happy end; becomes also so fortify'd against their noxious Powers, that they can raise no tumults in his mind; that he is neither affrighted at the thoughts of them, nor impatient when they are upon him, nor uses any indirect means to prevent or remove them.

2. Who, as a consequence of this, will not; either to gain the World, or to keep it, do a base and an unworthy Action; who can walk amongst Snares and Gins, and not be entrap'd; on troubled Waters, and, like his Saviour, not sink; whom all the Glories of the World cannot tempt into a wicked Enterprize, nor all its Oppositions hinder from pursuing virtuous ones; who in all Cases and Conditions (whether prosperous or adverse) is always the same, and goes the same way; whose mind is not  
diverted

diverted from its good purposes, nor his foot turn'd out of the right way by any outward Contingencies; who, let the Weather be fair or foul, let the World smile or frown on him, let him get or lose by it, will do what his duty requires; no worldly Circumstances can shake the stability of his mind; neither force nor flattery can work on his constant and unyielding Temper; his Heart is neither to be broken nor soften'd; like the great *Fabritius*, he is neither to be caress'd nor vanquish'd. In sum, it's the man, who is greater than his Perils, and stronger than his Desires.

II. What that Faith is, that overcomes the world?

Now of Faith there are several kinds: There is a Faith grounded on probable Reason, upon likely and promising Arguments, which yet are not evident nor certain, but may possibly prove false, tho they seem to be true; and this is rather Opinion than Faith.

Again, There is a Faith grounded on evident and certain Reason, wherein if a man's Faculties themselves are to be trusted, he cannot be mistaken; and this is rather Knowledge than Faith.

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But then there is a Faith grounded on Divine Revelation, the Word of God; and this is properly call'd Faith, and that Faith that overcomes the World; to wit, an hearty belief of all those things that God heretofore by his Prophets, and in this last Age by his Son hath made known to the world; whether they be Precepts, or Prohibitions, or Promises, or Threatnings, or matters of Fact, especially the Actions and Passions of our Blessed Saviour, or Declarations concerning the Nature of God, the workings of the Spirit, and the meritorious Effects and Consequences of the Son of God's great undertaking in order to Man's Salvation. The Apostle in the next Verse after the Text, comprehends all under this one Article; *The believing Jesus to be the Son of God.* Verse 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* For he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, must believe all that he said, and taught, to be true.

III. Now what are the strengths and forces of Faith, by which it obtains this Victory,

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is my third Enquiry, and may find an Answer in these following particulars.

1. As the Christian Faith affords many Excellent Precepts to this purpose ; To name some  
 1 Joh. 2. 15. of them ; *Not to love the world, nor the things of*  
 Matt. 6. 19. *the world. Not to lay up treasures on earth. Not*  
 Col. 3. 2. *to set our affections on things here below. Not to*  
 Rom. 12. 2. *be conform'd to this world. To use the world as not*  
 1 Cor. 7. 31. *abusing it. To keep our selves unspotted from the*  
 Jam. 1. 27. *world.* Precepts of that direct use and tendency to the Ease and Tranquility, to the Honour and Perfection of Human Nature, that were they not enforc'd by Divine Authority, would yet be sufficiently recommended by their own intrinick Worth and Excellency.

2. As the Christian Faith sets before us a most powerful Example, that of our Blessed Saviour ; He voluntarily depriv'd himself of the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this World, to make them vile and contemptible ; he underwent outrages of all sorts, the contradiction of Sinners, the sharpest Sufferings, to make them easy and tolerable. Now what can more effectually breed in us a disregard

regard of this World, with all its deceitful Poms and Vanities? What can more perfectly reconcile our minds to the heaviest pressures of affliction that can be laid upon us? than to behold what a profound Humility and Self-denial, what an invincible Patience and Magnanimity, what a generous greatness of Soul, and contempt of the World, he manifested through the whole course of his life. His Example shews the conquest of the world to be both practicable and honourable. The world has already been conquer'd by the Captain of our Salvation; so that we have but a vanquish'd Enemy to encounter with, broken Forces to resist; and fighting under his Banners, may be assur'd, if we are not wanting to our selves, of an easy Victory: Besides, the Person that hath led the way, and prevailed in this Combat, is the Son of God; and can any thing be more glorious, than to be, and to do like him? Thus our Lord buoy'd up his Disciples Spirits under all their Conflicts and Tryals; *In the world ye shall have tribulation, Joh. 16. 33. but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

3. As the Christian Faith assures us of Supernatural Assistances, those of the Holy Spirit; God knows, that, as the case now stands betwixt us and the world, our weak Natures are so unequal a match for the many and strong Temptations that are against us, that we can promise our selves no security without large supplies of Grace from above; and therefore it is that God hath promis'd us his Holy Spirit, to stand by us, and to succour us; to relieve the Infirmities of our minds, and to defend us against our Temptations: *If you that are evil know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall God give his holy Spirit to them that ask him?* That most kind and benign Spirit, whose delight is with the Sons of men, stands always ready to assist the generous Attempts of all sincere Persons after the Divine Life and Nature; he is daily insinuating into our minds, after a secret and invisible manner improving the light and reason of our Understandings, enlarging the power and liberty of our Wills, subduing of our Affections to worldly Objects, and raising them up, and fixing them on God and Goodness: The Devil is not so cunning to deceive

ceive us, to lay snares to entrap us, to administer suitable solicitations to thole Lusts and Appetites that are most predominant in us, as the Holy Spirit is wise to lead us into all Truth, and able to defend us against all his Wiles and Devices; *Greater is he that is in you*, says our Apostle, *than he that is in the world.* And *we are more than Conquerors*, says St. Paul, *through him that lov'd us.* Of the truth of which he himself was an eminent Instance, being able from his own experience to say, *The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*; that is, by the Grace of the Gospel he was enabled to love the world as little as the world lov'd him; for *what can separate us*, says he in the same place to the Romans, *from the love of Christ*? And *I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature*; that is, that neither hopes of life, nor fears of death, nor infernal spirits, nor Earthly Potentates, nor sufferings present, nor sufferings to come, nor height of Preferment, nor depth of Disgrace, nor any other thing, *shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*?

*1 Joh. 4. 4.  
Rom 8. 37.*

*Gal. 8. 14.*

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4. As the Christian Faith assures us of most Glorious Rewards after the Conquest: Rewards so far surmounting all that this world can pretend to, that they exceed them a whole Infinity, and will outlive them an Eternity: There is no more compare betwixt the after-expectations of a good man, and those things which the men of this world call present Enjoyments, than there is betwixt a Crown, and a Feather; Immortal *Hallelujahs*, and a Song; Solid Joys, and the Shadow of Smoke; all that Everlasting Heaven means, and some little things that come by chance, and stay but a while: Now the Nature of man being so fram'd, as to prefer a Great good before a Little one, and to abandon a Trifling Enjoyment for the sake of a more Noble and Illustrious Happiness, it cannot but give away the one in exchange for the other; it cannot but give away a little Popular Air, a little shining Dirt, the momentary Pleasures of a Lust, the neither Pleasures nor Profits of an Oath, the sick Delights of an Excess, and the Vexations of a Passion, in exchange for them. The Apostles of Christ, and  
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Christ himself, look'd through the Miseries of this Life upon the Felicities of the next; they saw the Glory that was set before them, and this rais'd their minds above this world, above its Poms and Vanities, above its Frowns and Persecutions; so speaks the Apostle, *For this cause* 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17. *we faint not, tho our outward man decay, our inward man is renewed day by day, whilst we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.* Nay, the Patriarchs of old by a far dimmer Light, some broken Beams from under a Cloud, Types and Shadows, discover'd so much of the Heavenly Canaan, that it made them love God, and cleave to him in the midst of all those difficulties he gave them to encounter with: In view of this Reward *Abraham* was content to leave his Countrey, his Kindred, and Relations, because he had his eye upon a better Countrey: In view of this Reward, *Moses* thought himself Rich without relation to the Court, Honourable without relation to *Pharaoh's* Daughter, and Happy in the Afflictions of the People of God. The Pleasures of the Court,



Heb. 11. 26. Court, the Treasures of *Egypt*, the Lustre of a Royal Family, signified nothing to that Faith that ey'd better things, and had *respect* to the recompence of reward.

Heb. 11. 1. All the Advantage this World has on its side, is, That its Forces are present and at hand, whilst those of the other world are lookt upon at a distance, and a great way off: But now Faith removes this odds, and sets them on the square, by making those of the other world present too; for *Faith*, says the Apostle, *is the Substance of things hoped for, and the Evidence of things not seen*: The *Substance*, the Subsistence, the very Being of things hoped for; the *Evidence*, the Revelation of things not seen: That is, Faith gives us as full an Assurance of the things we hope for, as if we had them in possession; and represents the things we see not, as convincingly to our minds, as if they were in sight: Faith has a kind of Prerogative like that of God, it has, as it were, an All-seeing Eye, invisible things are discern'd by it, and future things are present to it: Now by this alone is it of Force enough to overcome the world;



world; for the Powers of the World to come, being made as certain by Faith, as those of this World are by sight, those of this World are so infinitely inferior, that they cannot stand before them.

5. As the Christian Faith represents to us the dismal effects and consequences of being overcome by the world; no less than the loss of the Soul, and all that's Glorious and Happy, together with an endless state of insupportable Torments; a Loss, that in the Judgment of our Saviour (who best knew the Value of Souls, that purchased them with his Blood) the gain of the whole world is not able to repair and make amends for: *What shall it profit a man, says he, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Matt. 16.26. Here's a fair stating of the Case; our Saviour seems to suppose a Case which never yet happened, that one man should make himself Lord of the Universe, and have a Confluence of all the sweetneses the whole Creation could afford him, and that he should enjoy these

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without interruption, from the very first moment of his life, to the last; and yet, if for the sake of these he should lose his Soul, he would make but a very sad bargain; and for the Truth of this he appeals to the general sense of mankind, in the next words; and *what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* The words have a Potential Signification, and import thus much, How great things will a man give in exchange for his Soul? Where our Saviour alludes to that known Proverb among the Jews, *Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life:* And his Argument runs thus, If a man condemned to dye, and to suffer the Pains of a cruel Death, would willingly give all that he possesses in this world, to be delivered from it, because thereby he would be rendered incapable of enjoying this world; How much more would he give the whole world, had he it in his power, to be delivered from an Eternal Death? because thereby he would not only be rendered incapable of enjoying this world, but become moreover everlastingly miserable.

IV. I proceed to the Fourth Enquiry ; it may be said , If the Forces of Faith are so Strong and Numerous , how comes it to pass , that notwithstanding them , Faith is so often overcome by the world ?

Of this I shall give an Account in these Two Particulars : ( 1. ) Because our Faith is many times weak. ( 2. ) Because it is many times corrupted.

1. Because our Faith is many times weak , either through the shallowness of the root it hath taken , or for want of being excited by due Consideration.

The ground may be stony , and its root shallow ; this man sees not Reason enough to believe , and he has not Confidence enough for the contrary ; he is of a doubtful or double mind , as St. *James* speaks ; his Faith is wavering , and he is but an Almost-Christian ; it is risen no higher than Guess and Conjecture ; and that will not do ; no man will

deny himself what he feels to be pleasant and delightful at present, upon mere probabilities and peradventures; he'll be sure of something better hereafter, before he parts with what he now apprehends to be good.

Or else his Faith may be asleep, and wants to be awaken'd; and whilst it is in that dull and inactive state, like a Weapon that lies by, or a Remedy not us'd, it stands him in no more stead, than if he had no Faith at all; whereas did he excite and stir up his Faith, put Life and Vigor into it by due Consideration, it would be of strength enough to remove Mountains, if I may so call the Lusts of men, and nothing would be able to stand before it: Did he, as often as a Temptation assaults him, presents him an opportunity either to injure his Neighbour, or to abuse himself, rally up all the Forces of Faith against it; did he consider that the Pleasures of Sin are transient and vain, unsatisfying and empty; that he must dye and come to Judgment, and then wish, when it is too late, that he had never done it; that by his sin he highly dis-

displeases God, who made him, who feeds him, who cloaths him, who fain would save him: Did he often revolve in his mind the unspeakable Joys of Heaven, and the Horrors and Amasements of a sad Eternity: These Considerations, one would think, should be of force enough to make him withstand the Temptation; and so they would, did he remember them, think and consider of them: But alas! he shuffles all these Arguments together, forgets them as soon as he heard them; and foolishly ventures at all, and does the thing; not because he thinks it fit to be done, but because he will not stay and consider whether it be fit to be done or no.

2. Because it is many times corrupted; and at this Door also are we to lay in a great measure the many shameful Baffles and Overthrows the Christian receives from the world; his Corrupt Opinions and Doctrines; the false Glosses and Expositions, the Forgeries and Inventions of men have usually the same fatal influence on Faith, as Sicknes and Diseases have

"Ενεργειαι  
 ΓΑΛΑΤΩΝ.  
 Gal. 1. 6.

have on the Body; they soon enfeeble and dispirit it, by degrees taint the whole mass, and so alter its very Constitution, that it becomes *another Faith*, and administers to other purposes. But these are so many, as well amongst some of the Reform'd, as in the Church of Rome, that I should hold you too long at present to enter upon them: I shall therefore pass them over with this one general Remark; That whatever Doctrine amongst the one, or the other, that tends to stifle Endeavour, and to bolster men up in a lazy Presumption of God's doing all for them; that derogates from the Infinite Merit and Efficacy of our Saviour's Death, or abates the force of the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel; that provides Excuses and Subterfuges for Vice, or in any degree undermines the necessity of holy living; is a corruption of the Christian Faith, and what takes part with the world against us, instead of aiding us to conquer the world.

The Conclusion of all is this; That since it's Faith that overcomes the world;  
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and it is, through the weakness and corruption of it, that it so often miscarries ; that we would use our utmost diligence to keep our Faith strong and vigorous, pure and undefiled.

1. Strong and vigorous ; We must not take it upon trust, and at all adventure, but examine the Evidences of it, and the grounds of Credibility on which it is built. To this purpose it will be of great advantage to us, often to repeat over in our minds the several branches of our Faith, and meditate on the mighty confirmation it receiv'd : Think often on the Prophecies that foretold it, on the Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles in testimony of it ; how it was seal'd by the Blood of the Son of God, and of thousands of others that died for its sake ; and how the Proof it receiv'd was so full and strong, that a great part of the world was convinc'd of it in such a manner, as that Millions chose rather to lose their lives, than not confess it ; that all Torments were more eligible than the disbelief of it ; and that in spite of all the  
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Arts and Powers of Opposition, it overspread the Universe.

2. Pure and undefiled. And the best way to do this, is always to fetch it from the Fountain-head : The Catholick Faith was once deliver'd to the Saints, transmitted down to Posterity in the Sacred Writings of the *New Testament*, so clear and full as to its main and fundamental Points, that it neither needs an Infallible Judge to interpret it, or any Humane Traditions to supply the defects of it. This written Word, the Reform'd profess, and that truly, contains the whole Christian Faith; but the *Romanist* will have it bring down but a part, and leaves the rest for Tradition; but Writing is the best way to convey down Divine Truth, or it is not : If it be not, why was any of it written? If it be, why not the whole? But that it is the best way, appears from the Holy Ghost's making choice of this way, as to a part, by their own confession; but if as to a part, then it follows, as to the whole; or else the Holy Ghost did not do



do what is best as to that which is unwritten.

Did we now thus strengthen our Faith, and keep it pure and undefiled, it would become an irresistible Weapon, and with it we might safely venture out against all the force of the Enemy. Well might St. Paul call it, *The good fight of faith*: This will enable a man to resist all Temptations to any forbidden Pleasure, or unlawful Gain; this will enable him to bear with patience the greatest Evils, rather than let go his Integrity: This will subdue all his inordinate Desires after the good things of this world; this will remove all his Distracting Fears of the evils of it; this will make him sober, just and holy; this will make him wise, and strong, and patient; this will make him Partaker of a Divine Nature, and fit him for Heaven, by working in him an heavenly frame and temper of mind; this will not only conquer this world, but that also which is to come; it will trample on this, lay hold on that, and at last give

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us a full possession of it; when our Faith will become all Vision, our Hope fruition; when we shall receive the end of our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls; Which God grant for the sake of our Lord Jesus: To whom with, &c.

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*T H E E N D.*

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